A MEMOIR

—OF—

MISS SARAH SMITH STAFFORD,

THE PATRIOT AND PHILANTHROPIST,

—WITH—

SOME STATEMENTS OF HER ANCESTRY.

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LIEUT. STAFFORD,

In the dress worn by him until the year 1818.

See page 5.

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SOME STATEMENTS OF HER ANCESTRY.

Sarah Smith Stafford was a daughter of Lieut. James Bayard Stafford, of the Revolutionary Navy, and who departed this life at Trenton, on the 19th of August, 1838, at a very advanced age.

Said Lieut. Stafford was a son of William Howard Stafford, who was a British officer in the Fort of New York, and of his wife, Mary Bayard, daughter of James Bayard and granddaughter of Nicholas Bayard, that held a commission under Queen Anne about 1702. Said William Howard Stafford was sent with his troops to Wexford, in Ireland, where his wife, Mary Bayard Stafford, died. He afterwards for his second wife married widow Catharine Barry, mother of John Barry, who became the celebrated Commodore John Barry of the Revolutionary U. S. Navy, and from this marriage sprung the intimacy that ever after existed between the Barry and Stafford families.

Said William Howard Stafford was a son of John Howard Stafford, born in England, and was sent with his troops to garrison the first fort at Norfolk, Virginia, (America), about the year 1690. In Admiral Preble's history of the three U. S. Naval Historic Flags, he mentions that John Howard Stafford was sent as above mentioned. He there married Aurelia Athelia Fairfax, niece of the

first Lord Fairfax; she departed this life in Virginia and her remains were interred at Belvoir grave-yard, on the banks of the Potomac a few miles below Mount Vernon. Said John Howard Stafford also died in Virginia.

Said William Howard Stafford and his wife, Mary Bayard Stafford, had another son named John Roosevelt Stafford, brother to James Bayard Stafford; he served as an ensign in the Massachusetts Continental Line to the end of the Revolutionary War. He was the first secretary to the board of officers who met at Albany, New York state, to form the Society of the Cincinnati, and was a member of the Society of the Cincinnati of the State of Massachusetts. He was by profession a surveyor. He was well known at Boston and highly respected for his probity and correct principles. He died in the year 1812—was never married.

The father of John Howard Stafford, during the religious excitement in England, on going from Dublin, Ireland, to France, to see his sisters in France, fell overboard and was drowned on the passage. (See Plowden's Genealogy of the Howards and Staffords.)

Sarah Smith Stafford was born at Allentown, N. J., on the 27th day of July, 1802, and departed this life at No. 344 South Warren street, Trenton, N. J., on the 6th day of January, 1880, in the seventy-eighth year of her age. Her father, said James Bayard Stafford, was married at Greenwich, Fairfield county, Connecticut, in September, 1793, by the Rev. Nathaniel Finch, to Miss Abigail Smith, a daughter of Henry Smith, a soldier and patriot of the Revolutionary War. For his Revolutionary services and for the Revolutionary services of Lieut. Ephraim Bacon, grandfather of Abigail Stafford, see proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, Vol. IX., 1862, page 86. Their eldest child, Mary, was born at Greenwich, Fairfield county, Connecticut, and died at Allentown, Monmouth county, N. J., in June, 1822. Thomas Fairfax Stafford died in 1799; Samuel Bayard Stafford was born at Allentown, Monmouth county, N. J.

Miss Stafford's life was remarkable for its entire devotion to the Republic, to the memory of her heroic father and to relics of the war of the Revolution. She was the *first one* who came forward with money in support of the war for the suppression of the slaveholders' Rebellion, and contributed the sum of twelve thousand dollars in gold. (See ex-Governor Olden's letter introducing Miss Stafford to Governor Ward, of New Jersey, dated December 26th,

1865, in the possession of her brother, Samuel Bayard Stafford.) Six thousand thereof she loaned to New Jersey—the state paid it—which, with the other six thousand, in bonds, was stolen from her tin box, in a vault in the Trenton Bank, on the night of the 21st of January, 1872.

Her father, said James Bayard Stafford, at the time of the breaking out of the Revolutionary War, was in the mercantile business at the corner of Tryon's Row and Chatham street, in the city of New York The acting British governor published a proclamation requiring the citizens of New York to come forward and take oath of allegiance to King George III., otherwise to be considered rebels and traitors and dealt with accordingly. James Bayard Stafford refused to go forward and take said oath. He went to Rhode Island and assisted to fit out the ship "Kitty," a letter of marque, commissioned by the authorities of Boston to cruise upon the high seas; commanded by Captain Philip Stafford. He entered the service of the United States on the 18th day of April, 1776, and served upon said ship until captured by a British frigate, and the crew of the "Kitty" put in irons. About ten days before the great fight between the "Bon Homme Richard" and the "Serapis," the "Kitty" was recaptured by Commodore Paul Jones, and the irons taken off the crew of the "Kitty" and placed upon the crew of the British. The crew of the "Kitty," for gratitude, volunteered and assisted Jones in that great fight During the engagement the flag of the "Bonne Homme Richard" was shot from the mast-head and fell into the sea, when young Stafford leaped into the sea, recovered the flag, and upon nailing it to the mast-head of the "Richard" a British officer cut his left shoulder in two; this wound was never well healed, and in his old age it came apart, which caused him much pain.

Lieut. Stafford continued in the naval service of the United States and until the crew of the "Alliance" was discharged per resolution of Congress, for the discharge of the officers and crew of the ship "Alliance." His discharge is dated Thursday, February 19th, 1784, signed by John Barry, now in the possession of his only son and child, Samuel Bayard Stafford.

After the Revolutionary War, and whilst James Bayard Stafford was residing at White Plains, New York state, he received a letter from the Rev. Joseph Clark, a Presbyterian minister at Allentown, N. J., suggesting to him to come to Allentown and take charge of

the Allentown Academy, he having received a classical education in London, England, which he accepted, and taught in that academy seven years. He became acquainted with Joseph Holmes, a rich farmer, and who had been one of the committee of safety during the Revolutionary War; said Holmes loaned Lieut. Stafford the means with which to buy pork and flour, which he sold in Philadelphia. Holmes was a true patriot and friend to Lieut. Stafford as long as he (Holmes) lived. But politics had taken a start, partly because of Jay's Treaty, and as many of the men who had opposed the war were supporting John Adams, under the pretext that Adams was strongly conservative. These men were of the party called Tories, which was far too good a name for them.

Lieut. Stafford espoused the principles set forth by Thomas Jefferson, and became an ardent and zealous supporter of the administration of Thomas Jefferson. He was soon appointed to several minor offices in this state and United States, such as justice of the peace, which he held for twenty years, postmaster eighteen years, collecter of the customs and deputy collector of the direct tax in support of the war of 1812.

In cases of disputed boundaries of tracts of land, mostly in the pines of Monmouth county, where seldom any line stones had been set up, he was called upon to settle such disputes, having at sea learned the practical art of navigation, and by allowing one degree for variation of the compass in twenty years, he could arrive at the old and former lines of survey, whilst the other surveyors refused to accept the theory that the world itself moved irregularly or that it revolved, and gave for reason for their unbelief, if that was the case water in wells would run out. In the law suit between Isaac Imlay and John Hoar, about the division line, at the suggestion of Garret D. Wall, one of the attorneys, the case was taken from the Supreme Court and left to Lieut. Stafford to settle, which he did satisfactorily to both parties. After that a one-sided law was passed to quiet titles, "that in disputed cases of land, a suit to recover possession must be brought within twenty years." This law seems to quiet some people, but is a very unjust law. If a man steals a horse, the possession thereof often convicts him, but in the construction of the land law, possession gives him a title.

Commodore Barry, of the ship of war "Alliance," writes that Lieut. Stafford served through the whole war; at the request of the secret committee of Congress, I sent him with a message to Henry

Laurens, then a prisoner in the Tower of London ; this dangerous and difficult duty he performed with great fidelity and success. (See report of the U. S. Senate of the committee on Revolutionary claims in 1872, repeating a House report of same purport in 1860.)

Admiral Preble, in his pamphlet of the three Historic Flags, says that Miss Stafford furnished him with a description of her father ; that the first recollection of her father he wore a deep-blue coat with yellow buttons, blue breeches and white stockings. His hair was long and powdered and tied in a queue ; his shirts were ruffled and he wore ruffles at his wrist-bands. At times he wore a brown velvet coat and breeches, at other times a black velvet suit. When he attended court he wore a black silk gown. Justices of the peace, from 1804 to 1810, held courts in New Jersey called Quarter Sessions, and he was on the justices' bench in Monmouth county many years. He was the principal of Allentown Academy for seven years, and dressed in school in a plain morning gown ; out of school he wore a velvet suit then fashionable among the professional men, and in cool weather a surtout coat or surtout of blue with yellow metal buttons, and in still colder weather a blue cloth cloak ; he also wore a cocked hat. He was a highly-educated gentleman and taught Latin, French, navigation, surveying and book-keeping ; had private students occasionally that boarded with his family. Lawrence Lewis, one of the directors of the old U. S. Bank, was a pupil of his. He surveyed land for his neighbors and established bounds in difficult and perplexing cases. His globe, printed in Latin, is now in possession of his son. He had a brown suit trimmed very tastefully, which he wore occasionally, and a dress he called his court dress, trimmed with gold lace. The buttons of this dress, which are large and appear as if covered with glass with a gilt rim around, may now be seen at No. 344 South Warren street.

In 1818, Dr. John Stafford, of Baltimore, Md., and his mother visited him at Allentown, N. J., and he and his daughters urged him to change his dress and assume the Puritan or American dress. After considerable argument, he acceded to their wishes and submitted to the change. His hair was cut short and was no longer powdered, and he wore a black broadcloth coat and black pantaloons with a black satin vest. He never was satisfied with this change in his costume ; was always unhappy about it, and attributed to his awkward dress, as he styled it, what I suppose was due to his in-

creased years and the re-opening of his old wound of the left shoulder.

He was very lively in his early days and fond of dancing, and was so graceful in the minuet that his London teacher presented him to the King, before whom he exhibited his skill. He was the most accomplished gentleman, writes his daughter, I have ever met, and was known all over the country by the name of the "Old 'Squire." He married more couples than any other justice of the peace for many miles around. He never swore, and always said no gentleman would ever swear or spit upon the floor.

In the year 1828, his daughter, said Sarah Smith Stafford, came to Trenton and taught a school at the Baptist school-house, in South Trenton, for several years; having a talent to bring children on rapidly, she soon had a large school. Afterward Charles Higbee, Esq., who was one of the then principal citizens of Trenton, assisted her to begin a school in Trenton proper, sending his children and speaking to others to send their children.

In the year 1832 a small number of old Revolutionary soldiers, mostly militia men, who were not entitled to pensions under the act of 1818, which pensioned only those in indigent circumstances, met at the house of William Hyer, now State street, Trenton, for the purpose of petitioning the Legislature of this state for their relief for their Revolutionary services. Colonel Chambers, father-in-law of Mr. Hyer, dictated, whilst Sarah Smith Stafford wrote the petition, which Judge Thomas Gordon and Governor Peter D. Vroom introduced in the New Jersey Legislature, and Governor Ogden presented the resolutions in Congress. President Jackson recommended the passage of the bill for their relief. Thus originated the act of 7th June, 1832, which included all those who served, without the proviso in the act of 1818, of being in indigent circumstances.

Lieut. Stafford received a pension under this act of one hundred and twenty dollars per annum during his life and until his death, which took place on the 19th day of August, 1838, at a very advanced age, and under the ministration of the Rev. Dr. Frederick Beasley, Rector of St. Michael's Episcopal Church, Trenton, N. J. His remains were interred in the yard attached to that church, but afterwards removed to Mercer cemetery, and again removed to Riverview cemetery, His widow, Mrs. Abigail Stafford, received the same pension of one hundred and twenty dollars

per annum, during her life; she also received a grant of one hundred and sixty acres of land. She departed this life at Trenton, on the 9th day of August, 1861; her funeral was largely attended by the most respectable citizens of Trenton. Five clergymen attended her funeral, the bells of the First and Second Presbyterian Churches and those of the Trinity Protestant Episcopal Church were tolled out of respect to her memory. See page eighty-six of proceedings of Historical Society of 1862.) Her remains were interred at Mercer cemetery, but removed to Riverview cemetery, where, beside the remains of her late husband, they were interred.

After the death of her father, Sarah Smith Stafford went to Washington city, and with the assistance of Dr. William A. Newell, petitioned Congress for remuneration for supplies furnished the army whilst it lay at Dorchester Heights, Mass., by her grandfather on her maternal side.

She commenced a school at the navy yard, at Washington, her school being made up of officers' children; she remained there nine years teaching her school and attending to her claim. Her bill would pass one house, but before it could be passed by the other house Congress would adjourn and then she would have to begin her claim anew. Nothing daunted she urged her claim solitary and alone, and, at the expiration of nine years, she received her money.

During the said nine years, with the assistance of her brother, who resided at Trenton, the two obtained the allowance and payment of three hundred small claims of pensions, for soldiers and their widows and orphans, of the different wars. They had no claims ultimately rejected.

On the night of the 21st of January, 1872, the Trenton Bank was broken into by robbers, and all her money, with some belonging to her brother, Samuel Bayard Stafford, in bonds, amounting to fifteen thousand dollars, was stolen from her tin box, in a vault in the Trenton Bank; of these bonds three thousand four hundred dollars were registered, and by giving surety in double the amount to the Treasury department, she received duplicate warrants for the three thousand four hundred dollars, and that was all she ever received of the fifteen thousand dollars.

Miss Stafford being in Washington at the time the Trenton Bank was robbed, and having received a telegram from its cashier, Mr. Stryker, informing her thereof, she went immediately to Senator

Stockton and Senator Frelinghuysen, of New Jersey, and informed them that Senator Clayton, of Delaware, twenty-four years before, had presented a petition to the U. S. Senate for her, for the services of her father in the U. S. Navy in the Revolutionary War; that Senator Clayton died; that afterwards it was renewed in the House of Representatives, and in the year 1860 it was passed, but did not reach the Senate in time. Senator Stockton called up the said claim, and the committee on Revolutionary claims, in 1872, reported and repeated the same bill of the same purport as that made by the House in 1860. Senator Stockton made a patriotic speech in favor of the passage of said bill; it passed the Senate unanimously, Senator Beck cheering its passage until he became hoarse. It was afterwards introduced in the House of Representatives; the committee on Revolutionary claims reported in favor of its passage.

Miss Stafford being on the floor at the time, several members came to her and told her that if her bill was opposed, they would advocate its passage. One member from the West came to her, thanked her for coming forward with her said claim, and said it did him good to vote for it. The bill passed unanimously amid loud cheers. Miss Stafford received her money—eight thousand dollars—but as she used to say "was lucky in getting money, but was not cautious enough to keep it." She invested a large portion of it in Northern Pacific railroad bonds and some in the Midland railroad bonds; with the balance she bought a mortgage on some small houses in Philadelphia, to assist some children who were orphans and who had lived with her, and paid taxes and street improvements. The houses were upon ground rent; her mortgage only covered the houses, not the land; the owner of the ground sold the houses for his ground rents; Miss Stafford lost her money and the children lost their houses. Miss Stafford never received one cent benefit from her eight thousand dollars during her lifetime.

Miss Stafford, during the war of the slaveholders' Rebellion, showed her zeal for the good cause of the Union, by aiding the soldiers, being active in soliciting and sending clothing and delicacies to them. She loaned her Paul Jones flag of the "Bon Homme Richard," to fairs and festivals; it was exhibited at the sanitary fairs in Philadelphia and New York, and at the great fair in Trenton, in 1862, and at the Centennial in Philadelphia; her

kindness and charity will be remembered for the poor, as her talents and other finer qualities by those who knew her more intimately. She was the only lady admitted a member of the New Jersey Historical Society, also was admitted a member of the Washington Society, of Morristown, N. J., to whom she presented Revolutionary relics; and was likewise admitted a member of the Historical and Genealogical Society, of Natick, Mass.

Miss Stafford presented to the Birchard Library, of the town of Fremont, Ohio, many Revolutionary relics, and a portion of its museum bears the name of the Stafford collection. Her brother has received a very kind letter from Webb C. Hayes, Esq., son of the ex-President, that since the death of his sister, the citizens of that town have taken a deep interest in him and for the curiosities presented to the library of that town by his sister.

At the opening of the Centennial at Philadelphia, Miss Stafford with her own hand unfurled the starry flag of Paul Jones of the "Bon Homme Richard," and at the closing thereof, she lowered said flag amid the greatest applause and the firing of cannon.

Her funeral was numerously attended. An unbroken line of citizens and of persons from different parts of the Union, commenced at eight o'clock in the morning and continued unbroken until the cortege moved at half past two o'clock in the afternoon; among the masses were seen the principal inhabitants of the city of Trenton. It was estimated that more than two thousand persons viewed her remains as they lay in state encased in a plain walnut coffin, (as she had desired); gracefully draped around it, hung, in loose folds, the flag of the "Richard," which deceased had revered beyond all her earthly possessions. On the flag and on the lid of the coffin rested a wreath of flowers, the gift of Mrs. President Hayes; it was a beautiful tribute: all white roses, japonicas and camelias, types of Christian purity. The Episcopal service was said at the house, another service was held at three o'clock, in Trinity Episcopal Church, where the attendance was so great that many were forced to remain outside the edifice. Rev. Mr. Barbour, pastor of the church, and Rev. Mr. Bakewell officiated; several hymns were sung, after which the cortege proceeded to Riverview cemetery, where the interment was made. The pall-bearers were Drs. Woolverton and Warner, Mr. J. D. Hall, assistant secretary of state, and Edward H. Stokes, Esq.

Friends from Boston, Brooklyn, New York, and from Newtown, Long Island, and New York city were present, and letters of condolence were received from Philadelphia, Washington city and from other parts of the Union. Her brother, Samuel Bayard Stafford, received the following epistle from his excellency President Hayes:

EXECUTIVE MANSION,
WASHINGTON, 11th January, 1880.

Mr. Samuel B. Stafford, 344 *South Warren Street, Trenton, N. J.*

MY DEAR SIR:—Mrs. Hayes wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your note announcing the death of your sister, Miss Stafford; we have been much interested in her, and have been sensible of her kindness to us, expressed, as it has been, by many friendly acts. Mrs. Hayes, wishing to honor the memory of this patriotic lady, will send flowers to Trenton, which she hopes will reach there in time for the funeral.

With best wishes for yourself sincerely signed,

R. B. HAYES.

The flowers were accompanied by a graceful note from Webb C. Hayes, Esq., the President's son.